
THE
EARL of ESSEX.
A
TRAGEDY.

[Price One Shilling and Six-Pence.]

THE

PARL. OF ESSAY.

T R A G E D Y.

Price One Shilling and Six Pence.

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T H E
EARL of ESSEX.

A
T R A G E D Y.

As it is now Acting at the

Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane.

Written by

HENRY BROOKE, Esq.

Author of GUSTAVUS VASA.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. DAVIES, at Shakespear's-Head, in
Ruffel-Street, Covent-Garden ; and J. COOTE,
in Pater-noster-Row. MDCC LXI.

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P R O L O G U E

To the EARL of ESSEX.

Spoken by Mr. SHERIDAN.

*W*hen'er the brave, the gen'rous, and the just,
When'er the patriot sinks to silent dust,
The tragic muse attends the mournful bier,
And pays her tribute of immortal verse,
Inspir'd by noble deeds, she seeks the plain,
In honour's cause, where mighty chiefs are slain;
And bathes with tears the sod that wraps the dead,
And bids the turf lie lightly on his head.

Nor thus content, she opens death's cold womb,
And bursts the cearments of the awful tomb
To cast him up again—to bid him live,
And to the scene his form and pressure give.

Thus once fam'd Essex at her voice appears,
Emerging from the sacred dust of years.

Nor deem it much, that we retrace to-night,
A tale to which you've list'ned with delight.
How oft of yore, to learned Athens' eyes
Did new Eleētras and new Phædras rise?
In France how many Theban monarchs groan
For Laius' blood, and incest not their own?
When there new Iphigenias have the sigh,
Fresh drops of pity gush from ev'ry eye.
On the same theme tho' rival wits appear,
The heart still finds the sympathetic tear.

If

P R O L O G U E.

*If there soft pity pours her plenteous store,
For fabled kings and empires now no more;
Much more should you—from freedom's glorious plan,
Who still inherit all the rights of man;
Much more should you, with kindred sorrows glow
For your own chiefs, your own domestic woe;
Much more a British story should impart
The warmest feelings to each British heart.*



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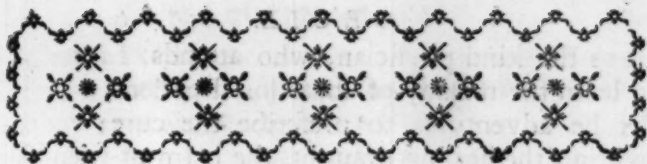
THERE are some few Passages in the following Tragedy different from those which are spoken on the stage ; the reason of which has been, that in dramatic writings, many things may appear well in the closet, which would not have a good effect in the representation.

Dramatis Personæ.

ESSEX,	Mr. SHERIDAN.
SOUTHAMPTON,	Mr. HOLLAND.
CECIL,	Mr. DAVIES.
RALEIGH,	Mr. PACKER.
Lieutenant of the Tower,	Mr. ACKMAN.

QUEEN ELIZABETH,	Mrs. PRITCHARD,
Countess of Rutland,	Miss MOWAT.
Countess of Nottingham,	Mrs. KENNEDY.

Guards, Attendants, &c.



T H E
EARL of ESSEX.
A
T R A G E D Y.

A C T. I.

Enter NOTTINGHAM and CECIL:

NOTTINGHAM.

LEAVE me!—Away!

CECIL.

I cannot—No, those starts,
Those deep fetch'd sighs, these changes
of complexion

Must have a cause, and I—

NOTTINGHAM.

How dare you, sir?—

'Tis poor, 'tis little in you, thus to pry,
To lurk, and watch me in the hour of weakness.

B

CECIL.

CECIL.

But as the kind physician, who attends
To learn the malady of some lov'd patient,
E'er he adventures to prescribe the cure;
To bring the healing draught, the balm of friendship.

NOTTINGHAM.

Friendship from man! perdition on the sex!
May ev'ry evil, ev'ry pang they bring
To the weak hearts of fond defenceless women,
Return in tenfold mischiefs on their heads!

CECIL.

Are none exempt? Can charity involve
The harmless with the guilty undistinguished?
Shall he who longs to do, or suffer greatly,
To save the dear lov'd object from affliction,
Be as the cruel wretch, who caus'd her care?

NOTTINGHAM.

O Cecil, if indeed you have lov'd truly,
If you have felt the stings of slighted passion,
Of heart torn hope, and raging disappointment;
You then will cast a kindred eye of pity
On the most lost, the most undone of women.
Effex—

CECIL.

—Ha! what of Effex?

NOTTINGHAM.

Read that letter.

CECIL.

—From him?

NOTTINGHAM.

The Traytor—read, and then revenge.
Yet no—the scroll that would reveal my shame,
His triumph—thus I rend to pieces, thus—
As I would tear the heart of the proud writer.

CECIL.

And could the brave, the gentle, gallant Effex,
Could he be this barbarian?

NOT.

The EARL of ESSEX.

3

NOTTINGHAM.

—Could I tell you?
Did shame not shut up utterance—but in vain
I send my eyes around to find a friend.

CECIL.

And can you be to seek when Cecil stands
Before you, suing but to be your slave?
Cecil whose strong and self-supported frame
Has brav'd the lasting frost of cold indifference.
O would you condescend to try his service,
What is there he would not attempt?

NOTTINGHAM.

—O Cecil!
If I have seem'd or distant, or averse,
To your great merit, and your kind regard,
Think of the cause—He claims your full resentment.
The cruel—The ungrateful—He alone
Engross'd me from the World. When soon to Ireland
His high commission bore him—torn—distracted—
Rack'd by a conflict of opposing Passions,
Strong love at length prevail'd—Hear it not Cecil,
What thought would hide—where memory recoils,
And scarce believes itself—I sent this man—
I sent—O death to modesty!—I did send him—
My vows, myself, my soul a willing slave,
In a fond letter!

CECIL.

—That indeed did merit
A fair return at least.

NOTTINGHAM.

—A fair return!
The proud, inhuman, the insulting villain!
O for a breath, that would at distance blast him!
Fair answer said'st thou? No—by all the powers
Of shame, and rage, that work in slighted woman,
A rude repulse!

B 2

CECIL.

The EARL of ESSEX.

C E C I L.

—And yet you love him still?

NOTTINGHAM.

Love! Cecil, say you, love?

Hate, hate—Within it labours, fell, and deadly.
 Know'st thou our sex, and think'st that a woman
 Slighted, refus'd, can love? No, no! the milk,
 The kindly flow of love is chang'd to gall,
 Runs with invenom'd poison thro' my veins,
 And like the basilisk's, my baleful eyes
 Would shoot swift death, and I could kill with looks.

C E C I L.

Know then, the guardians of your injur'd beauty,
 Whisper'd e'er this to my prophetick soul
 The vengeance due: and high as Essex sits,
 The love and glory of admiring England,
 He waits but for your voice to doom his fall,
 Then sinks to quick perdition.

NOTTINGHAM.

—Down with him,
 From his proud height, to the unbottom'd deep;
 Altho' the gorge of his wide opening gulph
 Should swallow thousands. Yes, if Cecil bids,
 Fate signs the mandate: Cecil's breath alone
 Informs our councils, and arrays our armies;
 Fills out the wide expanse of Britain's fails,
 And steers the vessel proudly through the world.

C E C I L.

Praise from that mouth is high reward! what more,
 What may he hope who vindicates your charms,
 And flakes your thirsty soul with noble vengeance?

NOTTINGHAM.

My hand, my heart are his.

C E C I L.

—With such reward
 In view, what shall I not atchieve? Then know

The

The EARL of ESSEX.

5

The queen prepares for council; wait her presence,
And you shall hear of mischief, such as minds
That soar uncommon flights alone can relish.

NOTTINGHAM.

I go, I fly! O be the moments short,
Till vengeance come to ease my tortur'd soul!

[Exit Nottingham]

CECIL *alone.*

The fate of Essex leaves my road smooth pay'd
To love, as to ambition—What altho'
Both objects be enforc'd? Reluctance gives
Impatient bliss, and heightens the enjoyment.
Southampton here! The second man on earth
Who stirs my fear, and therefore claims my hatred.
A stately branch he is, ingrafted firm
To the proud stem of our aspiring Essex;
But hew the hostile trunk, and every bough
Partakes the kindred ruin.

Enter SOUTHAMPTON.

CECIL.

Fair morning wait upon the brave Southampton.

SOUTHAMPTON.

Not so, my Lord, there hangs a cloud upon it;
Pregnant with pois'nous vapours, as they say,
Exhal'd from Cecil's breath, to blast the land,
And nip her brightest blossoms.

CECIL.

—Good my lord,

Is mystery the mode? What means your Lordship?

SOUTHAMPTON.

No mystery to Cecil's conscious spirit:
'Tis rumour'd that some dark malignant faction
Are leagu'd with hell, in plotting an impeachment
Of the most loyal heart that England holds,
Our great, our glorious Essex.

B 3.

CECIL.

C E C I L.

—I have heard

Somewhat of this, and as I know the earl
Valiant and noble, wish he may find means
To clear the charge of guilt.

SOUTHAMPTON.

—Guilt! said you guilt?

Come shew this monster of your own creation,
The phantom that state wizzards conjure up
Amid the depth of their nocturnal councils,
To make their power look dreadful o'er the land,
And scare our Britons from the side of virtue.

C E C I L.

My lord your zeal to this unhappy man,
Has clos'd your eyes to what a nation sees
With clear, unsway'd discernment; his ambition,
His late cabal with rebels, and the storm
Brew'd, and concerted with his Irish colleagues
To wreak the peace, and honour of his country.

SOUTHAMPTON.

Rather concerted in the cabinet,
Where spurious treasons are begot, and taught
To call some pre-appointed victim, father;
As statesmen please to bid, where'er they find
Talents to cross, or virtue to offend them.

C E C I L.

Be witness for me that I urge you not
To this rash mood, but rather warn Southampton
To bear himself aloof, sedate, and separate;
Lest he be held a partner of that guilt
Which such attachment warrants.

SOUTHAMPTON.

Patience heaven!

Shall insolence unpunish'd thus presume
To blot the visage of untainted loyalty?
Dare you proclaim a hunting thro' the land,
And point out worth and honour for the quarry?

Base

Base politician!—By the sacred name
That warms a Briton's breast, by liberty!
There's not a peasant in the train of Essex,
But has a fund of golden honesty,
Beyond what Cecil, and his close cabal,
With all their worth can weigh.

CECIL.

I answer not such railing—Fare you well—
And if you are a friend to bold Southampton
Bid him not cross the way that Cecil walks,
Or look to fall with Essex.

[Exit Cecil.]

SOUTHAMPTON.

Fall with Essex!
Statesman 'tis false, he sits above your soaring,
Too high for Cecil with his cumbrous load
Of grov'ling guilt to reach—Yet since he dares
To threat thus openly, the danger's near.
I'll in to council straight; and there perhaps
Their secret machinations may break forth.

Scene draws and discovers the QUEEN, NOT-
TINGHAM, CECIL *and Attendants.*

QUEEN.

From Spain, my lords, have you had tydings lately
By any private letters, that import
Their new designs?

CECIL.

Not any, royal madam.

QUEEN.

'Twas rumour'd some time since, that they intended
A second visit, and a new armada;
But the last packet from our agent there,
Speaks no such purpose.

CECIL.

— No, my glorious mistress,
They're sick, war-surfeited, they yet do pant
From the fore memory of their old encounter.

SOUTHAMPTON.

While time shall travel down from age to age,
Leading white-handed faith, and liberty
To nations yet unborn, oft shall they turn,
And thro' past worlds roll back their grateful eye,
On your distinguish'd day! Wherein the powers
Of darkness were confederate; when Rome
Rose up with all her champions, to impose
Chains on the limbs, and night upon the mind:
Then had the worlds of freedom, and of truth,
Return'd to chaos; but Elizabeth,
Heaven's minister below, sent forth her sons
Of light, and order; her immortal Drake,
Her glorious Essex, and all conquering host
Of freeborn Britons: heaven that day avow'd
His virgin champion, and confirm'd the gift,
Th'eternal gift of liberty to man.

QUEEN.

Yes, my all dear, my still unconquered people!
You have deriv'd a glory on your queen,
That lifts her sex above the conquering chiefs
Of Egypt, or of Macedon: they fought
Impoling slavery, we conferring freedom.

CECIL.

You are too gracious; heaven but make us equal
To the least part of all your wondrous bounties!
So should Tyrone, and wild rebellion, soon
Sink underneath the force of loyalty,
And Britain's host still find a faithful leader.

QUEEN.

Why, Cecil, have you fresh accounts from Ireland?

CECIL.

CECIL.

Nothing, my royal mistress, more than usual,
Old ills repeated.

SOUTHAMPTON.

— Now the snake begins
To wind his venom'd train.

QUEEN.

— What ills, good Cecil?

CECIL.

Amazing grace! how willingly your majesty
Forgets the faults committed by a subject.

QUEEN.

That Essex (you would say) so vers'd in conquest,
For once became remiss, and lost a season —
Is not that all?

CECIL.

— And holds close amity
With the most dreadful foe of queen, and country,
The fierce Tyrone; confers in secret with him;
Parlies with traitors, and cabals with rebels,
No friend to Britain present, whence ensue
Scandalous truces, shameful to —

QUEEN.

— Hold, Cecil —

You grow inveterate, 'tis his first offence;
None here can boast perfection: Essex too,
Like us, good statesman, may not want his failings.
I would not be extreme to condemnation,
Nor clear in his excuse. I've therefore sent him
Commands of purpos'd chiding, that enjoin
Quick reparation; never more to bend
His brow unlaurel'd to the coast of Britain.

Enter

10 The EARL of ESSEX.

*Enter Sir WALTHER RALEIGH, and others
of the Commons.*

CECIL.

May it please your majesty, your faithful Raleigh,
And others in commission from your Commons,
Attend with their address, and some few bills,
Humbly presented for your people's safety.

QUEEN.

Ay, that's a theme, to which my charmed ear
Could list for ever — Welcome to your queen,
To your true servant welcome! Give me to know
How I may best attain the glorious end
For which alone I wish to live; to feast
Upon that royal luxury of soul,
The peace, the weal, the bliss of my kind people.

RALEIGH.

Immortal health, and never ending joys,
To the imperial majesty of England!
Bright star of Christendom! the virgin light
Which guides our steps to truth, our arms to honour!
Queen of true-hearted Britons! who do wish
The sun should be extinguish'd in his orb,
Ere you their better glory should decline,
And leave your realms in more lamented darkness!
Your parliament in care of these your kingdoms,
(Who live but in your life) present three bills
With humblest suit to pass them into acts
For the dear safety for your throne, and person.

QUEEN.

Let Cecil see what they contain.

CECIL,

— The first

Is for establishing a train'd militia
Thro' every shire; and for a farther levy
Of certain horse, and foot, as a strong guard

Of

The E A R L of E S S E X.

11

Of safety, to our queen's most sacred person.
The second — That two hundred thousand pounds
Be rais'd in part for payment of those troops,
Farther to be dispos'd of as our sovereign
In her dear pleasure shall appoint.

Q U E E N.

—How poor
Were thanks to such a people! but be sure
For you I'll prove a thrifty usurer;
And every talent trusted to your queen,
Shall be return'd with fivefold interest
Of love, and due beneficence. — Proceed.

C E C I L.

The third consists of several articles
Expressive of your subjects just abhorrence
Of plots, and treas'nous practices — concluding
With a submissive prayer, most humbly offer'd
For the impeaching Robert earl of Essex.

Q U E E N.

Who dares impeach him? whence this insolence
Without my privy? Am I awake?
Say, am I England's queen? do you know me, Not-
tingham?

N O T T I N G H A M.

You are our queen, our royal mistress?

Q U E E N.

— No!

'Tis false, a waxen pageant, set aloft
For statesmen's hands to mould, and move at will.
How was I lull'd! Ha! Rebels! well ye warn
Of plots, and treasonous practices — Ye smooth ones,
Who, like hyæna, make your sly approaches,
By whine, and cringe — then leap with quick surprize,
And rend your feeder. Come, what would you farther?
'Tis yours to dictate, my imperial masters!
At your command I'll drench my innocence
In the most brave and loyal blood of England;

Tread

12 The E A R L, of E S S E X.

Tread out offensive virtue, pluck fidelity
Even from the heart of Britain. You my masters!
Shall rule unrival'd then, and your ambition
Be prop'd by guardians like unto yourselves;
Fools for your senate, knaves for every office,
And cowards for commanders.

S O U T H A M P T O N.

— Horrid plot!
Most wicked combination! what shall guard
The throne or kingdom, when their fences thus
Are sapt in secret, or confessedly
Assail'd in open day? when even your Essex,
That glorious man, by whose undaunted courage
The cowards that impeach him live in safety;
When he must fall to make a public breach,
Where mask'd ambition may encroach on majesty,
And treasons gain free entrance.

Q U E E N.

That I have lov'd thee, Britain — O how truly!
With such a love! too much of that — But had I,
Had I the spirit of my father Harry,
I had array'd my majesty in terrors,
And thence deriv'd respect; held the rein hard,
And the lash active; then you had known your ruler;
Yes, ye petitioners for blood! you then
Should have been glutted, even with the blood
Of your own crew, untill the gorged stream
Had choak'd your faction.

C E C I L.

— First, and best of monarchs,
Vex nor your royal heart; not all our lives
Are worth the least emotion, that may give
Your sovereign mind disturbance.

Q U E E N.

— O 'tis plain
I've reign'd too long; their hunger is variety:
They've ta'en a jewish surfeit of their sweets,

And

The EARL of ESSEX. 13

And thence have turn'd to loathing. — 'Tis enough —
Their pleasures be fulfill'd — Thou pageant sceptre,
Thou banisher of truth, that do'st invite
The bow of flattery, and the smile of falsehood;
Thus do I hurl thee to thy worshipers,
And am myself alone —

[Throws away the sceptre.]

RALEIGH.

O queen ador'd, rever'd to adoration!
Lo! to the dust beneath your dread rebuke,
All aw'd, and humbl'd, your repentant subjects
Fall prostrate for forgiveness.

QUEEN.

— Dare not then
To dictate to me farther; I'm a Briton —
I was born free as you, and know my privilege.
Henceforward you shall find that I'm your queen,
The guardian and protectress of my subjects;
And not your instrument to crush my people:
No passive engine for cabals to ply,
No tool for faction — I shall henceforth seek
For other lights to truth; for righteous monarchs,
Justly to judge, with their own eyes should see;
To rule o'er freemen, should themselves be free.

[Exeunt.]

The END of the FIRST ACT.

ACT

~~And there have I found
Their pleasures be still —
And do I find thee to thy worth
And am myself alone~~

A C T II.

Enter Countess of RUTLAND and SOUTH-AMPTON.

RUTLAND.

IS he arriv'd? I shall run mad with joy!
Is my Lord come indeed?

SOUTHAMPTON.

— Too sure, too sure!
But Oh! that gulphs, far sunk beneath all fathom,
And wide as ocean flows, were now betwixt you!

RUTLAND.

Now by the sudden transports of my heart,
Which bounds, and kindles; spite of thy foreboding,
What mean those fears? what ill hath chanc'd, what
change,

Since late the Queen, like circling providence,
Planted her heav'nly guardianship around him,
And screen'd him from his envious foes?

SOUTHAMPTON.

— Alas!
His rashness has undone us. His return,
Against the appointment of his high commission,
And in the palpable and conscious breach
Of the Queen's absolute commands; hath forfeited
All his proud titles, honours, offices—
Perhaps his precious life.

RUTLAND.

RUTLAND.

— O where, where is he?
Fly, thou dear friend! stop, intercept, conjure him
Quick back to Ireland, ere the blabbing wind
Can whisper his arrival. Tho' the world,
For one lov'd look, were short and poor of purchase,
What's world, or looks, or I, or all to Essex?
Fly, thou dear Friend—

SOUTHAMPTON.

— Alas! 'tis now too late—
He's just at hand—Fame says within this hour
He enters London. As I hasted hither,
I met the haughty Cecil, envious Raleigh,
And treacherous Nottingham in close cabal:
From ear to ear death murmur'd, and askance
They cast a smile of scorn, and with their eyes
Bid me defiance as they pass'd.

RUTLAND.

— Ah friend!
I sink beneath my fears, my heart dies in me.
I'll to the Queen this moment; fly, fall prostrate,
Cling to her royal feet, declare our marriage,
Weep, pray, conjure her, yet—if not for Essex,
Not for her Rutland's sake to save him, yet
Even for the little trembling pledge I bear him,
For whose most precious safety she stands charg'd
To her whole people.

SOUTHAMPTON.

— Stop—beware of that,
There's not another step 'twixt that and ruin.
Time—prudence checks my tongue—Let it suffice,
All other treasons would appear as loyalty
To that dread secret! that alone is wanting
To seal the doom of Essex—Soft, the Queen!
Severe and slow she comes; upon her brow,

16 The EARL of ESSEX.

In mute, but discontented characters,
I read her inward tumult—You had best retire.

[Exit Rutland.

Enter QUEEN, CECIL, RALEIGH,
NOTTINGHAM, and Attendants.

QUEEN.

Is Essex then return'd?

CECIL.

— He is.

QUEEN.

— What hither?

To London? 'tis impossible—

CECIL.

Just now arriv'd.

QUEEN.

— Are law and loyalty but names?

Arriv'd against our personal injunctions!

'Tis treason but to think it.

CECIL.

— Will your Majesty

Be pleas'd to see him?

QUEEN.

— No! —

CECIL.

— Shall I then publish

Your royal will, forbidding him the court?

QUEEN.

Neither—How dare you, Sir? What, must I still

Be guided, nor allow'd my proper judgment?

Must every faucy minion call'd to council

Straight arrogate controul? and claim to be

Dictator to his Queen?

SOUTH.

SOUTHAMPTON.

First, best, and brightest
 Regent of hearts! whose voluntary throne
 Rises supreme, amid the blissful tracts
 Of liberty and reason! at your feet
 A faithful subject falls. O royal Mistress,
 I tremble to excuse my valiant friend:
 He may be rash, impetuous, of a temper
 Not tun'd to each occasion; for the Earl
 Has artful foes, who studiously provoke
 The faults for which they ambush. But that he
 Is firm, and loyal; that his heart o'erflows
 With fulness of his Queen; with truth, and faith,
 And wondrous gratitude; I would stake down
 The worth of my eternal soul to warrant.

Enter a Gentleman, who whispers SOUTH-
 AMPTON.

QUEEN.

Whate'er Southampton may be as a subject,
 I see he is a friend—at least to Essex.

SOUTHAMPTON.

May it please your Majesty, the Earl is come,
 And waits your royal pleasure.

QUEEN.

— Tell the rebel —

Yethold—I have better thought—Yes, I will see him—
 But it shall be to sting his haughty soul:
 Anger would give him consequence—Contempt
 Is what he least can bear. Give him admittance.

C

Enter

TH-

Enter ESSEX.

ESSEX.

Health to the virgin majesty of England!
 Your servant, your true soldier, Queen of monarchs!
 For the first time now trembles to approach you,
 As being here in conscious disobedience
 Of your dread orders. Yet, when I have shewn
 That 'twas the last necessity compell'd me
 (Thanks to the artful malice of my foes)
 To this now seemingly unduteous act;
 When I have shewn that no alternative
 Was left me, but to seem or disobedient;
 Or bear a traitor's name; I shall rely
 Upon your majesty's accusom'd grace,
 Weighing the jealous honour of the soldier,
 To palliate, if not clear, the subject's fault.
 —I'm charg'd with guilt, with being false, disloyal,
 False to my Queen, to England false; could Essex
 Bear such a charge, and live? No—swift as thought,
 And bold as innocence, fearless of danger,
 Of death, or what is worse—His Queen's displeasure—
 He comes to front his foes; even to the teeth
 Of malice comes he, to assert his honour,
 And claim due reparation of his wrongs.

QUEEN.

Cecil, are those petitions answer'd yet,
 Which late I gave in charge?

CECIL.

They are, an't please you.

ESSEX.

What not a word, a look?—not one bless'd look
 Of wonted influence, whose kindly warmth
 Might chase these envious, and malignant clouds
 With which your servant is begirt? Nay then—

My

The EARL of ESSEX.

19

My night comes on apace—I see—I see
The birds of dark and evil omen round me;
Cecils, and Raleighs: how they scent their feast—
Sagacious ravens, how they snuff from far
The promis'd carcass—Be it so—for Essex
Is but the creature of imperial favour,
By his Queen's voice exalted into greatness,
And by her breath reduc'd again to nothing.

QUEEN.

Ha! that's mournful—
I must not listen to that well known voice;
I feel the woman rising in my breast
—But rouse thee, Queen of Britain, be thyself.
What, does the traitor still abide our presence?
All who have truth, or fealty to their Queen,
Follow me straight.

[*Exeunt all but Essex.*]

ESSEX.

Ha! is it then so?
What spurn'd, contemn'd, insulted!
Not heard, scarce seen; contemn'd! how, how feels
that?
Contempt and Essex pair'd!

Enter SOUTHAMPTON.

— What, one friend left?
Then Essex still is rich.

SOUTHAMPTON.

— My soul's elect,
Be firm! be all yourself! see from the throne
Proud Cecil comes, commission'd to discharge
His thunder at thy head.

ESSEX.

— I see, my brother—
Never did that Leviathan appear,

C 2

But

But as the prophet of some coming wreck;
Foretasting ill, and writhing in his nostrils
The promise of a tempest.

Enter CECIL and RALEIGH.

CECIL.

— Hear ye, Sir,
What the unquestion'd majesty of England
With gentlest mercy tempering awful justice,
By us pronounces—Robert Earl of Essex,
She here divests you of your trusts, and offices;
Your dignities of governor of Ireland,
Earl marshal, master of the horse, prime general
Of all her forces, both by land, and sea;
And lord lieutenant of the several counties
Of Essex, Hereford, and Westmoreland.

ESSEX.

Then I'm divested—well—what more? for these
Are but the lightness of a summer's robe,
The gauds and outward trappings of her Essex.
What farther?

CECIL.

— That you instantly depart
The Court, and stir no farther than your house,
Without an order from the Queen, and council.
And lastly, 'tis her pleasure, that you send
Your staff by us.

ESSEX.

— Ha! that indeed requires
Some pause—

CECIL.

— What say you? What may we return
In answer to her Majesty?

ESSEX.

E S S E X.

— But wilt thou—
Wilt thou be sure expressly to deliver
What Essex gives in charge?

C E C I L,

— I will most truly.

E S S E X.

Then tell her, treason never harbour'd yet
In bold blunt truths, or openness of action:
It seeks close covert in the smiles of courts,
Fleers in the cringe, and skulks behind the vizard.
Tell her—my honest Cecil! tell thy mistress,
That treason is a statesman, near her throne,
Who holds his Queen besieg'd, and calls it guar-
dianship;
Who seals th' imperial sense; cuts the dear ties
'Twixt sovereign and subject; fills her church
With proselytes to vice, and sets corruption
Aloft, even on the seats of injur'd justice:
For guilt seeks fellowship, and league with guilt,
And vice supports his kindred.

C E C I L.

— I shall remember.

S O U T H A M P T O N.

— Tell her too,
That while she slumber'd, that arch felon, Cecil
Scal'd her high seat, and seized the reins of empire;
Thence bids the dews descend, and thunders roll
To his direction; sheds her bounties down
Where his vile minions for vile ends may prosper:
But ever plants the bolt, and deadly blast,
Where worth, or wisdom flourish—Wretched Britons!
Is there a patriot, is there yet a man,
Whose blood, whose toils, whose virtues have acquir'd
Aught to his country's service; 'tis a crime

Set down for capital; a barbed mote,
 Fretting the eye of envy, and of Cecil.
 But O! the brave, the valiant never scape him,
 For cowards still are cruel.

CECIL.

— Well observ'd—

This I shall tell, and that Southampton said it.

RALEIGH.

My Lords, in speaking thus, you tax her majesty
 Of weakness, and injustice both.

ESSEX.

— I care not—

Suggest whate'er your malice may devise,
 'Tis equal all to Essex.

CECIL.

— May we then

Prefume your answer summ'd in this?

ESSEX.

— You may.

CECIL.

You'll not return your staff by us.

ESSEX.

— I will not.

From my Queen's hand did I receive that staff,
 Nor will I yield it back to any other.

CECIL.

Fare ye well, lords—

[*Exeunt Cecil and Raleigh.*]

SOUTHAMPTON.

— Now are they fraught with venom,
 Which they will strait discharge, with all the force
 Of spiteful rage, into the royal ear.
 I must away to counteract their poison.

ESSEX.

E S S E X.

Yes my Southampton, haste, say to the queen
That Essex now adjures her by his services,
If ever they found favour in her sight,
To grant him but a hearing, a short hearing;
From her own lips let him receive his doom,
To her own hands restore his offices,
And he will yield unmurmuring to his fate.

S O U T H A M P T O N.

I fly, my lord, and doubt not yet to gain
An interview—Oh! may its end be prosperous.
[Exit Southampton.]

E S S E X.

Where now is Essex? Where the late rebuke
Of nations, hostile to the peace of Britain?
Who spread their lands with rout, their seas with
terror!—
Deminish'd—shrunk—As tho' he had never tri-
umph'd;
As tho' he ne'er had conquer'd for his country.
O hard earn'd glory! long wrought pile of greatness!
Are your enchanted works no more than so,
A word, and vanish?—Now—Where are they now?
The rushing mob—The shouting multitude—
The sweeping levee and the bending circle?
All fled, all mute, and lonesome now around me!
As tho' I walk'd o'er graves and charnel ground;
As tho' I carried famine in one hand,
And pestilence in t'other.

Enter R U T L A N D.

R U T L A N D

—My Essex!

C 4

E S S E X.

E S S E X.

—Rutland! O, my better angel!
 How has thy presence fill'd this solitude!
 And like a beam from heaven dispers'd the gloom
 That overspread my soul.

R U T L A N D.

—I could not bear
 To think you were so near me, and not rush
 To snatch one look—But I must haste—

E S S E X.

—Fear nothing.

R U T L A N D.

We shall be seen.

E S S E X.

—No eye is bent this way,
 No footstep turn'd; for a discarded favourite,
 Shun'd like the plague, makes every place a desert.

R U T L A N D.

May I then look! indulge my longing eyes?
 I cannot speak to thee, my heart's too full.
 Essex! you turn away!

E S S E X.

—Alas my love
 What object now is Essex for thy eyes?
 Stripp'd of his honours, all his glories wither'd,
 A bare, and fightless trunk!

R U T L A N D.

—O Essex, Essex!
 Can'st thou think so meanly of thy Rutland,
 As to believe the gaudy pageantry,
 'The trappings of ambition, ever made thee
 More lovely in my sight? No, Essex, no,

I lov'd

I lov'd thee for thyself. Thy pompous titles,
 Thy splendid dignities, commands in war,
 I look'd upon as my worst enemies,
 Which interpos'd, and held me from my lord.
 Are they remov'd? then there's no obstacle
 Between his Rutland, and her soul's elect;
 And thus she claims him, thus she folds him in,
 From war, and from ambition, cruel rivals!
 For all she wedded, all she ever wish'd,
 Her wealth, her every want, her world is here,
 And scorns addition.

E S S E X.

—Heaven make me worthy,
 Of so much tendernefs! yes, I will own
 Ambition had its charms; but 'twas in hopes
 To raise my love as high above her sex
 In dignity, as she transcends in merit:
 Else had I never barter'd one blest hour
 Of thy society for what the world,
 Thro' a proud life of conquest, and dominion,
 Could yield in absence.

R U T L A N D.

—And will you then
 No longer listen to delusive fame?
 No more be guided by the witching fires
 Of wand'ring glory? Homeward wilt thou turn,
 Where love, and Rutland, have prepared the seat
 Of humble rapture, and of inward peace?
 A little empire of serene delights,
 Of guardian virtues, and observant smiles,
 All ready, waiting for their lord's arrival.

E S S E X.

O, my fantastick folly, that could listen
 To the enchantments of that syren fame!

But

But now the spell is ended ; never more
 Shall vain ambition tempt me to forego
 My soul's substantial bliss. Adieu false splendours !
 My rest is fix'd even here—We'll find some spot
 Secluded from the world, like that fair garden,
 Where first the princely parent of mankind,
 Blest in his consort's sweet society,
 Wish'd for no other pleasure : there we'll live,
 Far from the haunts of men, from vice, and folly ;
 Reign in each other's hearts with mutual sway,
 The noblest royalty ! Be love our treasure,
 We shall be wond'rous rich ! love our ambition,
 And who exalted like us ?

RUTLAND.

—O my Essex !
 What a new paradise were there ! to know
 No pangs of parting ; see thee every day,
 And sometimes all the day—Sweet holiday !
 Peace round my pillow ; and my morning sun
 Cheer'd by thy presence ; and thine eyes to speak
 Love's language ; and thy smiles to interfuse
 The swell of cordial joy—O, my lov'd Essex,
 That life indeed were blest !

ESSEX.

—Ha ! who comes here ?
 Be not alarm'd my love, it is my friend.

Enter SOUTHAMPTON.

Well, my Southampton—

SOUTHAMPTON.

Heavens, what madness this !
 Could any eye behold you—And the queen
 Has just enquired for you—Fly with speed.

RUTLAND.

RUTLAND.

Alas! from what a happy dream of heaven,
Hast thou awak'd me! what is human bliss?
A moment's meeting, a long age of absence!
One rich, and precious drop of cordial joy,
Drench'd in a current of insipid time,
Or deep affliction.

ESSEX.

—Light, and life of Essex,
From thee be evil far: we soon shall meet
To part no more.

RUTLAND.

Farewel—Remember, Rutland
Knows not one happy hour, when thou art from her.

[Exit Rutland.]

SOUTHAMPTON.

The queen to my importunate request
Has granted you a hearing, be prepar'd:
You must command your temper, for believe me
'Tis on the warmth of that, the generous warmth,
(Which still accompanies the noblest natures)
Your foes rely, to fire the subtle train,
Which they have laid to blast your hopes for ever.

ESSEX.

Well, I will try—altho' 'tis wond'rous hard
Calmly to bear th' envenom'd shafts of malice;
And pois'nous tooth of foul mouth'd calumny!
Yet I will try—Be truth my only weapon,
Patience my shield. But no dissimulation
Shall with its base alloy, bring down the ore,
The pure, rich ore, of which the noble mind
By nature's hand is form'd, below truth's standard.

No,

No, let me perish, e're one grain of falshood,
Infect, and leaven that Integrity
Of soul, in which man's dignity consists.
Had I the choice to make, I swear by heaven,
I should esteem it far more eligible,
To fall with honour, than to rise by baseness.

[*Exeunt,*

The E N D of the S E C O N D A C T.





A C T III.

Enter CECIL *and* NOTTINGHAM.

CECIL.

NO more—Bright Nottingham—We strive in
vain——

Essex can only be subdu'd by Essex ;
He stands impregnable to all beside :
And if his native pride, and proper passions,
Serve not to pull his own destruction on him ;
He bids for perpetuity in favour.

NOTTINGHAM.

The queen, I fear, has motives for her favour,
Which queens may feel, but not avow ; unmark'd
Within this hour I stole upon her privacy ;
Her brow was sunk from royalty ; and sad,
And desolate her aspect ; as of one
Betroth'd to loneliness ; in whom the pride
Of power, and beauty, was no more remember'd.
I listen'd—But her broken accents spoke
A voice suppress'd by grief ; while down her cheek
Stole the pale tear, which ever as she wip'd,
A piteous heir succeeded.

CECIL.

CECIL.

—I perceive

She is much mov'd of late, and prone to starts
Of sudden passion, even beyond her temper.

NOTTINGHAM.

How did she brook the haughty earl's reply
To her last message?

CECIL.

—Never did I see her

So stung, so thoroughly enkindled—Straight
She issued hasty orders for impeachment;
When in the very stroke of instant fate,
Southampton came, and with a subtle tale
Calm'd all her rage: And now is Essex sent for,
To plead to what Southampton boldly files
The gall of false accusers.

NOTTINGHAM.

—Curs'd be his tongue!

For then the ground we've gain'd will all be lost.

CECIL.

I see the queen but seeks some thin pretext
To cover inclination; some smooth terms
Of soft submission, or acknowledg'd error,
To reinstate this minion of her fancy,
In wonted height of arrogance.—But see
Her closet opens—Let us not appear
To pry on her retirements.

NOTTINGHAM.

—You withdraw,

I'll wait within her call.

[Exit Cecil.]

Enter

Enter QUEEN.

QUEEN.

The proud, insensible, ungrateful wretch !
 The thankless, kindless, faithless, barbarous Essex !
 False to his loving queen, his friend, his patron ;
 False to his——Hold thee there, for I will tear him
 From my fond bosom, tho' the vital drops
 Of my sad heart should follow,—Queen of Britain
 To what art thou reduc'd ? with not one friend ;
 Forlorn, and desolate, amidst a realm,
 Whom as a parent bird, with hov'ring wings
 Thy daily love has gathered in from danger,
 And foster'd with thy life,——Ha ! Nottingham !
 I thought I had been alone.——

NOTTINGHAM.

——Pardon a duty

Perhaps too forward—Ah, my royal mistress !
 All is not well—Upon my knees I beg——
 Somewhat hangs heavy on your mind, or haply
 Your precious health's in danger.

QUEEN.

Rise, my Nottingham——

I am in health, and thank thy tenderness ;
 Only a little troubled that my people
 Grow weary of my love : I have reign'd long ;
 Such is the nature of inconstant man,
 The purest ore of happiness below,
 Without variety, will lose its value ;
 Whilst novelty can give the vilest dross
 Both stamp and currency. Prithee my friend,
 What say the people to this haughty man,
 And his late conduct ?

NOTTINGHAM.

——Please your majesty,
 They seem to blame him highly.

QUEEN.

QUEEN.

—Blame him, say'st thou?

NOTTINGHAM.

Indeed it was not well.

QUEEN.

—Not well—The Traytor!

And is that all? Come, come, speak plainly to me.
Is it thus tamely that my subjects see
This daring insult to my crown? Or warm'd
With duteous zeal, and loyal indignation,
Vent freely their reproaches?

NOTTINGHAM.

—Thus commanded,
I shall without disguise speak what I've heard
Of this imperious foldier.

QUEEN.

—Aye, pray do—
Be plain—What says the world of me, and Essex?

NOTTINGHAM.

Of you they never speak, but in a prayer
Of due thanksgiving, and of wishes breath'd
As incense up to heaven, for length of life,
And days of happy omen.

QUEEN.

—Well, proceed—
Of Essex then—

NOTTINGHAM.

—Of him they utter terms
Of due reproach, and plenteous imprecation.
His popularity, they give to pride,
That cringes to be courted; his beneficence
To niggard bribes for flattery; his high courage
To bear-like brutal rashness; his achievements

To

To a mean fondness for the blab of fame :
And all his acts stil'd patriot, all his labours,
His risques, his wounds, his conquests for his country;
To close and treacherous plottings on her rights,
And sacred liberties.—For he's ambitious,
Dark, dreadful, and aspiring, as the fiend
Who first rais'd war in heaven, and tumbling thence
Unpeopled Paradise; and so they wish
The fall of Essex may be quick, and——

QUEEN.

——Hold——

No more——Thou hast rail'd thyself quite out of
breath.

In thee 'tis base, 'tis barbarous insolence
To echo thus the vileness of the rabble.
Unhappy Essex! truly hast thou serv'd
A false base world, and now hast none to friend,
Save her thou hast offended.

NOTTINGHAM.

——Please your majesty
Your own express command——

QUEEN.

——Away, away——

Thou see'st thy queen, misfortune, and the world
All bent against one man, and yet can'st find
Within that ruthless and obdurate breast,
No room for pity.

NOTTINGHAM.

——Madam, I hope——

QUEEN.

Well, well, no more of it——

'Tis past, and I forgive—Send Rutland hither.

[Exit Nottingham.]

What has my passion done? Perhaps unfolded
The very secret it attempts to cover;

D

What

34 The E A R L of E S S E X.

What I would hide from thought. Why stands my
soul

Upon the watch to listen and enquire
Tydings, which most it dreads to learn, the faults,
And errors of my Essex? Why my heart,
Why art thou prone to utter terms of blame
Against the cruel troubles of thy quiet?
Yet can't not bear the slightest censure drop'd
From any other Tongue, as tho' all crimes
Against myself were light, and what is spoke
Against my Essex, stood alone for treason.

Enter R U T L A N D.

My Rutland, I did send for thee my girl;
I have observ'd that thou art sad of late.
Why are thy lovely eyes depress'd with sorrow?
Can I do aught that may dispel the cloud,
That envious cloud, which hangs upon thy beauties,
And robs me of my friend?

R U T L A N D.

—Ah, queen of grace!
And heavenly goodness! you oppress your servant,
With this excess of condescension.

Q U E E N.

—Why—
I love thee well, my Rutland, well, and warmly;
Trust me I do.—Injurious Nottingham,
Hath held displeasing conversation with me,
Touching my lord of Essex; insomuch
That I did send her from my sight in anger.

R U T L A N D.

Ha! that dear name, starts every pulse within me!

Q U E E N.

Thou bluest, Rutland.

RUTLAND.

RUTLAND.

—At the wond'rous grace,
The wond'rous goodness of my queen.

QUEEN.

—Indeed

Thou'rt of a grateful nature, ever sweet,
And kindly temper'd. Come then to my Bosom,
And share its warmest love.—Tell me, my Rutland,
Is it not pity that so brave a man,
So form'd for gallant acts, and upright honour,
That Essex should be false, should prove a traitor?
And goaded by ambition; should attempt
The sceptre of his queen; to whom he owes
A countless debt of favours; by whom raised
Beyond a subject's state, he proudly now
Would grasp the crown, which seems within his
reach.

RUTLAND.

It cannot be, it is impossible;
The soul of Essex is above such baseness,
Such black ingratitude. Ah! royal mistress!
Had you but heard him, on the breath of praise
Lift up the exalted name of England's queen,
As I have often heard him!—

QUEEN.

—Say'st thou Rutland,
Hast thou heard Essex talk of me?

RUTLAND.

—Of you?

He owns no other theme. In courts I grant
He is no minion, but a soldier bold,
And jealous of his honour: but when his truth
Is free to heaven, and honest ears, 'tis then
He vents the swell of gratitude, and tunes
His words to loyalty, his voice to love.

Your acts, your laws, your virtues, and your beauties,

Your every excellence of mind and person,
Vary his numbers thro' a ceaseless round
Of untir'd praise; and all is of his mistress,
And all of England's virgin majesty,
And all is full of you.

QUEEN.

—Indeed my Rutland,
I would fain hope that Essex still is honest:
But then he's so ungovern'd, rash, so headstrong,
Nor law, nor duty hold him: I do fear,
I greatly fear, with safety to my fame,
I may no more protect him.

RUTLAND.

—Not protect him!
By the bright star of mercy in your soul,
That shines on the distressed—Oh say you not
That he is honest? Yes he still is loyal,
Faithful, and firm: the virgin light of heaven
E're yet it mingles with our grosser elements,
Is not more pure. O will you not remember
His worth, his truth, his toils, and his achievements?

A wondrous story all! high deeds of fame
That gird the crown of England's queen with glory.
His valour too! his valour royal madam!
It foils the heroes of romance: a name
So formidable to the foes of Britain,
It spares our English host, and of itself
Discomfits armies.

QUEEN.

—Ha! this heat is more
Than friendship's warmth; 'tis from a stronger fire—
She loves him—Aye, 'tis so—And is herself
Too lovely! wretched chance!—What have I done?

Just

Just conjur'd up a second storm to wreck me.
Leave me.— [Exit Rutland.]

Enter CECIL, RALEIGH, NOTTING-
HAM, &c.

CECIL.

May it please your majesty, my lord of Essex,
Return'd by your command, entreats admittance.

QUEEN.

—Let him appear.

Now queen of Britain, now support thy state!
Now guard thy treacherous heart, but for this once,
Against its dear, its insolent controuler,
And fear no future foe—Come hither Nottingham.

Enter ESSEX, and SOUTHAMPTON.

ESSEX.

Before I plead my cause, permit me thus,
Most gracious mistress, thus in due prostration,
To pay my grateful thanks, for this last favour.
In granting me a hearing, that once ended,
To my queen's justice, I submit my life,
And what is dearer to me far, my honour:
Implicitly to your tribunal bow,
Humbly prepar'd, and equally resign'd
To either sentence.

QUEEN.

My lords, what suppliant's this? Can this be he,
Our late imperious subject? He, who holds
A staff of independence, and a state
That scorns to yield to our supremacy?
O, these are gallant acts! and well become
The boasted name of our all conquering Essex!

D. 3

Who

38 The EARL of ESSEX.

Who bravely turns his courage on his queen;
But where his duty calls him to the combat,
Can coolly condescend to terms of peace,
And gentle treaty.

ESSEX.

— Is it come to this?
To be a term of ridicule, and mockery,
Where most I would be priz'd? cast by my Queen
To public scorn, and mean contempt?—Then Essex—
Then art thou fallen indeed! Why this, my mistress?
Are there not chains, and dungeons; blocks, and axes?
These had been fitter instruments of royalty,
And done a nobler justice on your soldier—
I think your majesty was pleas'd to speak
Touching some treaty, as a charge against me
Of something criminal.

QUEEN.

— Yes, with Tyrone,
Your parley; and your truce—Discharge those stains,
Your covert articles with England's rebels.

ESSEX.

Alas, how soon pretences may be found
To make the envy'd fall—Of treaty—Yes—
I do avow it. Am not I your general?
Impower'd for war, for peace, to treat, to fight,
Levy, disband, to punish, and to pardon.

QUEEN.

And should the mighty Essex have confin'd
These powers to peace alone, even when rebellion
Led forth his hosts, and dar'd him to the combat?
Whilst he—

ESSEX.

— Shrunk like a coward—Is't not so? Ha! madam!
Essex, and cowardice!—let those stand forth

Who

Who dar'd to match them—Ask your ministers
Why they withheld my army from the North,
By keeping back my due recruits, and subsidies.

Q U E E N.

You grow too bold—You are call'd here to plead,
Not to impeach—Your army was sufficient.

E S S E X.

No, royal madam, it was not sufficient
To war with heaven, to fight against Omnipotence!
It was consum'd with fevers, and diseases;
For Essex could have fear'd no other foe.
There's not a casuist in Rome's artful school,
Or Cecil's darker council, who can mark
The slightest lapse of duty in your servant;
And shall he not retaliate, shall he not
Unwind the subtle clue, which leads his Queen
To cruel sarcasm, and unjust resentment.

Q U E E N.

Unjust, and cruel! hold—no more—I charge you!

E S S E X.

Not speak, not speak! madam, I am your subject;
The world contains not one more dutious; yet
Here I must not be silent—Thoughts to slaves,—
But speech to Britons—Yes I will assert it,
The freedom of my native land, tho' death
Did cross me to the teeth—A criminal debar'd
His privilege to plead! 'tis evident
My life's conspir'd, my glories all traduc'd;
These bosom'd snakes, and ear-informing sycophants
Gape for my plenteous heirship; even my Queen
Foredooms her subject, and gives up her soldier,
A sacrifice to faction.

D 4

Q U E E N.

QUEEN.

Oh, he'll be lost!—Undo himself, and me!
 What, I conspire, traduce, foredoom thy sentence!
 Know, thou proud wretch, thou hast no other friend:
 Thou who art so observant! who didst spurn
 My orders, letters, messages—But hold,
 Beware how thou dost shake my wrongs too much,
 Lest they fall thick, and heavy on thy head.
 Rash fool, and undiscerning;—Yet thus far
 I do forgive thee; pardon thee that life,
 I did conspire—But for thy offices——

ESSEX.

—— I throw them at your feet—and proud indeed
 To be acquitted of all debt to majesty!
 Now give them up to cowards, courtiers, parasites;
 And dub them champions; in whose doughty guard-
 dianship
 Your Essex can't be mis'd: whilst he is banish'd,
 And bears no mark of royal gratitude,
 But wounds for toils, for dangers ignominy,
 And sufferings for allegiance: haply sent
 To desarts, or to herd with savages——
 There he may find more equity, and honour,
 Than in the faith of princes.

SOUTHAMPTON.

—— My lord, my lord!
 Recall your temper.

QUEEN.

The audacious traitor!

ESSEX.

—— Traitor! ha, traitor! yes, because I fenc'd
 Your throne; this breast, this scarr'd breast still its bul-
 work;

For

For covering England with my spreading laurels;
 Whilst your safe subjects slept beneath the shade;
 For humbling Spain, your proud, and dreaded rival,
 And waſting all their India to your Thames;
 For building up the fame of England's Queen
 So high, it flames a beacon to the world.
 Said I your fame? Your life—your life—kind miſtreſs!
 For ſaving that, and cutting bold Northumberland,
 And hoſtile Weſtmoreland, ſhort by the head:
 This did the faithleſs, and degraded Eſſex—
 But I'll remove the traytor from your ſight.

QUEEN.

Hold, Sir—
 Go not without reward— [Strikes him.

ESSEX.

Death! hell! from whence? my Queen—
 [Half draws his ſword.

QUEEN.

—What would the villain?
 Dares he attempt my life?

ESSEX.

—Rash woman!
 Were you a man, you durſt not—Your hot father,
 Bold Harry, durſt not rique it.—What talk I
 Of Harries? not young Ammon, as whoſe nod
 The ſervile Earth fell proſtrate, had ſurviv'd
 To boaſt this deſperate deed.

QUEEN.

May the mark ſtick like Cain's, for thy rebellion!
 Thou madd'ning wretch, unſtam'd, and dangerous ever.
 I give thee up—Y will no more againſt
 Thy own outrageous folly, ſtrive to ſave thee.

Like

42 The EARL of ESSEX.

Like thy last hopes, I leave thee to the stings
Of guilt and desperation—now cast forth,
Unpitied and unblest of earth, and heaven,
And thy too partial queen.

[*Exeunt all but Essex and Southampton.*]

SOUTHAMPTON.

What have you done? ruin'd yourself and friends
By your high carriage.—Fly, my lord, yet fly,
Follow the Queen, intreat, implore her pardon.

ESSEX.

Away!—The spot of infamy is on me!—
The blow has fir'd my soul, and all within,
Is deafning uproar—Never 'till this hour
Was Essex fit for treasons, cruel joys,
And glutting horrors! Get thee hence, Southampton,
For I'm the tumbling of a thousand towers,
Ruins that threaten far, to involve all
Who sap, or prop, within a like perdition.

SOUTHAMPTON.

I fear no ruin, when my friend's in danger;
If thou must fall, thou shalt not fall alone:
Southampton never will forsake his Essex,
But share his adverse, as his prosperous fortune.
Away then, let us fly this dang'rous place.

ESSEX.

Aye, there thou say'st, my friend, avoid all courts,
The bane of native dignity, and greatness.
But shall it be? Shall drones, and wasps alone
Devour the treasur'd sweets of all the land,
And drive the bees from their long-labour'd mansion?
No—let us purge, or overturn the hive—
There yet is feeling—yet is fire in England!—

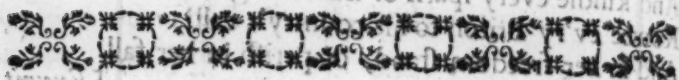
I'll to the streets, the city, wake, alarm,
And kindle every spark of slumb'ring virtue :
Rouze ev'ry Briton to his country's call,
And in her freedom stand, or perish in her fall.

[*Exeunt.*]

The END of the THIRD ACT.



ACT



A C T IV.

Enter severally CECIL and NOTTINGHAM.

NOTTINGHAM.

HA! Cecil—well—and is he, is he taken?
 Joy! joy! my Nottingham—he's sunk for ever,
 Caught in the very act of broad rebellion:
 Essex is fall'n, no more to rise. No more
 Shall politicians set the gins of state,
 Or nets of circumvention; for the lion,
 In his blind rage has rush'd upon the toil,
 Where he may roar, and tear, and gnash in vain,
 But never shall get free.

NOTTINGHAM.

Oh, it o'erjoys me, ~~of my~~
 Feeds the keen hunger ~~of my~~ vengeful soul,
 To see this pride, this insolence of manhood,
 This scorner hurl'd down from his dazzling height;
 To see him drop with all his train of glory,
 And vanish in the dust—Ha! Cecil.

CECIL.

— Hold,
 The Queen,—if possible conceal your transport.

Enter

T O A

Enter QUEEN and Attendants.

QUEEN.

What is he crush'd? This trampler on authority;
—The lofty one! and is he fall'n?

CECIL.

He is——

Thanks to the sacred power who guards your ma-
jesty!

QUEEN.

Then he is humbled at the last—This proud one!
The manner of it Cecil?

CECIL.

——When the earl

Withdrew from court, all mad, and chaf'd with pas-
sion,

He hurried to his house; and feverally
Summoned the friends in whom he most confided.

A num'rous band they were of lawless spirits,

Whose joy is riot, and whose hopes take fire

From the wild spark of dazzling novelty,

And gainful revolution. In their council

It was resolv'd, Southampton should attend

To form the numbers who were yet expected;

While the arch rebel march'd, as he did boast,

To raise the city.

QUEEN.

——What my faithful citizens!

Could he hope that?

CECIL.

——He did; and as he pass'd,

The vulgar, ever eager of events,

Pour'd in from every side, and swell'd the concourse.

To

46 The EARL of ESSEX.

To right, to left he bended, and as one
 Train'd to the Areopagus of old,
 Or Rome's prevailing rostrum, with smooth act
 Of mute emotion, thro' the distant eye,
 He sought to reach the heart. To all around,
 His voice now sunk, now rais'd to exclamation,
 Appealing to the wisdom of the mob,
 Against state policy; much did he talk
 Of crowns begirt with evil counsellors;
 Of trust misplac'd—Good monarch's, but misled
 By wicked ministers—Stale topicks all;
 Yet these will gloss, and colour every cause,
 While man shall kick at government—He then
 Descended to himself; spoke piteously
 Of suff'ring virtue; number'd o'er his wrongs,
 And counted every scar; the time, the place,
 The peril too of each; all borne he said
 For them, and for their Children: then he wept,
 And they wept too, soft souls! as tho' each gash
 Had bled anew.

QUEEN.

—Alas! I wonder not,
 That sight had melted even his queen to pity.
 Proceed—

CECIL.

The earl perceiving in their eye
 The work of passion—Straight he cry'd, arm, arm!
 For truth, for liberty! arm ye my friends!
 Off with your galling riders! down oppression!
 If not for Essex, for your selves, your sons,
 Your latest issue! what are you to feel,
 If me they spare not? what must 'fall the fold,
 When their great guardian's murder'd?—Here he
 paus'd:
 But none reply'd; for tho' his mournful story
 Had filled their hearts with sorrow, yet the close
 Bore such a frightful face of dangerous treason,

That

The EARL of ESSEX.

47

That terror soon succeeded—One slunk off,
Another follow'd; 'till all soft and silent,
Like snow they melted from his side.

QUEEN.

—How then?
How look'd the rebel left alone?

CECIL.

—At once
Fear, guilt, and disappointment, rush'd upon him;
Amaz'd he hasten'd where his barge attended,
And reach'd his house by water, at the time
When your brave troops had forc'd the outward gate,
And made Southampton, and his faction pris'ners:
Then might you see the indignant rebel cast
A look of desperation at high heaven,
As one renouncing hope; forth flew his sword
As he would rush on death; but sore begirt
At length he yielded to ignoble hands,
And clos'd the tale of Essex.

QUEEN.

—I once hop'd
His morning sun, that brightned as he rose,
Might also set with equal rays of honour.
Where is the earl?

CECIL.

—Under a sufficient guard
In order for his sending to the Tower.

QUEEN.

Ha! order'd to the Tower, whose orders, sir?

CECIL.

Madam, the earls are yet without.

QUEEN.

—'Tis well—
To prison with Southampton—But for Essex,

I'll

I'll see him e'er he goes : let him appear—
And all withdraw.

[*Exeunt all but the queen.*]

—Heavens ! what a scene is this ?
How shall I bear it ? Be compos'd my heart !—
Can that be Essex ?—The distressed, the fall'n,
The forlorn Essex !—What a state hears !
Still undiminish'd, still himself—Away
With pomp, and borrow'd lustre then ; true greatness
Shall build a seat of lovelier majesty,
With Essex, and misfortune.

Enter ESSEX.

Essex it is not thus we should have met—
You ought to know it is not—I did hope—
But 'tis no matter—You may speak, my lord,
If you have ought to offer.

ESSEX.

Nothing, madam.

QUEEN.

'Tis well, and yet—perhaps 'twere better, sir,
You'd think again—Our meetings shan't be frequent.

ESSEX.

It might have been your majesty's good pleasure
To spare ev'n this—I sought it not.

QUEEN.

—I know it
Ungrateful man, I know it—But I hold
No longer parley with thee—It is finish'd—
Thou everlasting troubler of my quiet,
Soon, soon we shall be both at peace.

ESSEX.

—Enough—
I have my death, and you your wish—

QUEEN.

QUEEN.

—I Essex!

I wish thy death! you know—But let me calmly
Demand of thee, what was it that could tempt thee,
To court, invite, and pull down on thine head
A ruin so reluctant? To o'erbear
All law, all order?

ESSEX.

—Is that yet to learn?

When every packet brought me fresh advices
Of the malicious plottings of my foes;
Yet I could o'erlook that, secure in innocence,
Could wait my time: but when I found my Queen
Had listen'd to their tales; under her hand
Confirm'd, soon as I saw that doubts and jealousies
Were deeply rooted—I no longer paus'd—
Law, order, even your own injunctions then
Were but as chaff before the wind; I flew
To see with my own eyes if it were true,
That I had lost your favour—That once gone,
The animating soul of all my hopes,
The end of all my thoughts, and all my actions;
The world had nothing in it worth my care,
And life or death were equally indifferent.

QUEEN.

Was that the motive? why was not I inform'd?

ESSEX.

Inform'd! which way? Was I once heard, regarded?
When prostrate I implor'd my Queen to hear me,
Was she not cold, and deaf, as thawless ice,
Or ears of adamant?—Rejected, spurn'd,
Cast to the rav'ning jaws of my pursuers,
Like the lone pard, I was at length compell'd
To turn upon my hunters. But had Essex,
Had Essex been the traitor he is deem'd,

E

He

He had not singly fac'd a host of foes,
But led up troops, inur'd to victory
Beneath his banner, to a man prepar'd
To fight, or fall for Essex.

QUEEN.

—There is some weight
In that, and I would fain believe your motive
Was such as you declare—Yet, Essex, Essex!
Oh thy rash pride! if thou had'st condescended
But to the light appearance of reproof,
From thy kind Queen—

ESSEX.

—Appearance, Madam?

QUEEN.

—Yes—

And when I would have colour'd to the world
Substantial favour, with a shew of chiding—

ESSEX.

A shew of chiding!—O my gracious mistress,
Did you not hate me? Did you not indeed
Abhor, detest your soldier?

QUEEN.

—No, too well—

Too well I lov'd thee, proud, unbending man!
Could I have hated thee, I had been happy.

ESSEX.

Ha! Lightning blast me first! my Queen in tears!

QUEEN.

Away thou hot, thou undiscerning Essex!
Could'st thou not trust a friendship, that had stood
Firm as th' irrevocable doom of fate,
Against thy enemies? their daily murmurs,
All their loud complaints, petitions, and impeachments
Dash'd

The EARL of ESSEX.

51

Dash'd back with indignation on the front
Of thy accusers—Might not such a friend
Expect some small concession? Did'st thou grant it?
Did'st thou not stand in haughty opposition?
Fly to the city, levy cruel war
Against thy Queen, against thy kind protector?
Who could almost have pray'd for thy success,
Altho' her crown, altho' her life perhaps,
Had been the barbarous forfeit.

ESSEX.

—O my mistress!

You have undone me—Your o'erpow'ring goodness
Has crush'd my heart—I see my folly now,
My crime broad staring in my face—O wretch,
Blind wretch!—Yet let me not be charg'd
Beyond my proper guilt—The weight of that
Alone will overwhelm me. It was pride,
Unparallel'd presumption, arrogance
Beyond example—But your crown!—Your life!
To attempt those—O no—In all the wilds
Of frenzy, such a thought could never enter
This loyal bosom.

QUEEN.

—Fain would I believe—

ESSEX.

Believe! ah, royal madam, can you doubt it?
By the dread secrets of that unknown world,
To which your servant hastens, no—His thoughts
Ne'er aim'd at such damnation—Then—Even then
When I did think your hatred of your Essex
Rose to a hostile loathing—I had then
Laid down my life to purchase to my Queen,
Access of days, and honour.

QUEEN.

—O! no more—

Enough, my soldier—I have been to blame;

E 2

We

We both have err'd, mistaking each the other.
 Fatal mistake! how can it be repair'd?
 What's to be done?—

ESSEX.

—Nothing for me, my frenzy
 Has borne me far beyond the bounds, beyond
 The reach of mercy: I must die—
 Your fame, your peace, your future welfare, all
 Demand this sacrifice, and I will go
 A willing victim; 'tis the only way
 To expiate my crime. Yet ere I fall
 Thus on my knee let me implore—

QUEEN.

—Rise Essex,
 I cannot see you thus.

ESSEX.

—Permit me, madam!
 The hour's at hand, when all you see of Essex,
 Shall be restor'd to dust; say, my blest mistress,
 Say, if my blood may wash my stains away?
 Will you then drop your heavenly pardon down
 Upon the guilt, and folly of your Essex?
 And when forgot by others, may he hope
 To find some place within his Queen's remembrance?

QUEEN.

I cannot speak to this—down swelling heart!
 May heaven bestow on both, a pardon free
 And full, as that which now I grant to thee.
 Can Essex too forgive his Queen the blow,
 Her rashness gave him.

ESSEX.

—'Tis too much!—Too much
 This condescension! 'tis a cruel goodness,
 It pierces to my soul.

QUEEN.

QUEEN.

—Our time is short—
 Soon will the lords, your judges be assembled
 For life, or death—You stand upon the brink!
 I fear—I would do much—'Tis true my fame
 Is dear—The pleasure of my people too,
 'Tis peril unto both—Yet Essex—Yet—
 I cannot see thee lost—Here is my gage—
 Take it, and with it take my royal word,
 That whensoever you return this ring,
 Whate'er be your request, it shall be granted,
 To my crown's value.

ESSEX.

—On my knee I take it—
 A radiant token, like the showery bow;
 When first the patriarch hail'd it in the heavens;
 Blest'd envoy of divinity appear'd,
 And grace to wayward man!

QUEEN.

Farewel!—Who waits?

Enter Lieutenant of the Tower.

There take your pris'ner hence, and guard him safe,
 Until his hour of trial.

[Exeunt ESSEX and Lieutenant.]

—Now I feel
 My heart more easy, all may yet be well.

Enter RUTLAND and Ladies.

RUTLAND.

Where is my Queen?—Where is my royal mistress?
 Yet hold—Recall your sentence—At your feet
 I throw myself for mercy—Mercy!

QUEEN.

Ha!—What do'st thou mean?

RUTLAND.

—O! never will I rise,
 But here take root, the very plant of sorrow,
 'Till you will hear, and grant; 'till I've implor'd,
 Obtain'd my full petition.

QUEEN.

—This is frenzy!
 Thou do'st amaze me Rutland—Rise.

QUEEN.

—No, no.
 Thus will I kneel, and weep, hold for ever;
 Cling to your feet, incumber all your steps,
 For pity—'Till you do relent—For pardon!
 Pity, and pardon!—

QUEEN.

Quick, declare your meaning.

RUTLAND.

I fear—And yet I must—The worst is silence—
 Will you then promise?—Will you then prepare?—
 It is a story that may start your patience.
 My lord—Your servant—Your ill-fated soldier—
 Your Essex—Save him—Save him!

QUEEN.

—Ha! what said'st thou?
 O my prophetic soul!—Is't thy concern?
 How? Where?—

RUTLAND.

—Save him!
 Save my lost lord—Your Essex—Save his life,
 And save the life of Rutland—O! he is—
 He is—my husband—

QUEEN.

QUEEN.

—Heavens! thy husband!

RUTLAND.

—Yes:—

A dear, a fatal name it is—I see it,
By the dread spark that quickens in your eye,
We were in secret married, a short while
Before my hapless lord set out for Ireland,
On his last expedition.

QUEEN.

—Serpents! vipers!

My curse it is to bosom such alone!
And all my fost'rings, all my nourishments,
Are paid me back in poison—Married! married!
Then thou art wedded to thy death.

RUTLAND.

—My death!

Alas! that's nothing; would my death appease you—
His life is all I ask—O royal madam!
You cannot know—You never had a husband;
You cannot feel how dreadful are the terrors,
The agonizing pangs of a fond wife,
Who fears to lose the husband of her heart,
Her first, her only love!

QUEEN.

—O! I am rack'd!
Off, off! I say with those detested hands!

RUTLAND

I will not, cannot—E're you cast me from you,
Think, feel, how I am torn—My throbbing heart,
My frantic pulses, how they start, and beat,
To break their limits—My affrighted infant
Who know no guilt, yet trembles at your fury,
And starts, as conscious of his father's danger.

E 4

QUEEN.

QUEEN.

Quick, tear her from me—Drag her from my
fight—

RUTLAND.

O if you are woman, born of woman—First
Say but that he shall live—Shall he not live?
My love, my Essex, my life's lord.

QUEEN.

Why am not I obey'd?—Hence—Tear her hence—

RUTLAND.

Oh, these inhumane creatures!—I'm too weak,
My last of strength forsakes me, and I sink
Into despair's deep gulph.

QUEEN.

—Be that thy portion!

May comfort never find thee! may thy offspring,
If it should see the light, prove a fresh source
Of torment to thee—May we never meet!
Be our appointments wide as pole from pole,
Nor let that hated aspect shock me more.

[Exit Queen.]

RUTLAND.

Yet stay, return—And Rutland shall assist
To frame new curses on herself—She's gone—
His doom is seal'd—He dies—Then welcome all,
The blackest plagues, that ever clung to misery!
May woes, on woes be heap'd, 'till the full measure
O'erwhelm my soul, and crush me into rest.

[Exit.]

The END of the FOURTH ACT.

A C T V.

SCENE, *the Tower.*CECIL, *and Lieutenant of the Tower.*

CECIL.

IF you regard your present place, or hope
For any future favour, to a moment you will
Observe my orders.

LIEUTENANT.

Most religiously.

Enter NOTTINGHAM.

NOTTINGHAM.

Sir, by her Majesty's command, I bring
A message to my lord of Essex.

LIEUTENANT.

—Madam,
I shall acquaint my lord,

CECIL.

—How's this, my Nottingham?
To Essex from the Queen, and you the messenger?
Is she not yet resolved?

NOTTINGHAM.

—Not fix'd a moment.

First when she heard the traitor was condemn'd,

She

She started, and her colour turn'd to milk;
 Then blushing, scarlet deep, she strove to hide
 Her inward tumult; thank'd the lords his judges,
 And bad that execution should be speedy.
 But pausing said, upon a farther thought,
 She'd wait to hear if yet the criminal
 Had aught to offer—Then retir'd, and pass'd
 An hour in private—Sent in haste to call me;
 Bid me draw near, look'd wistfully upon me,
 And will'd me to convey her last of messages,
 To ruin'd Essex—Let him know, said she,
 I can no longer bar the pressing claims
 Of justice on him—Yet if he has reasons
 That are of weight to stay his execution,
 Let him deliver them by you—Then blush'd;
 Breath'd a short sigh, and pressing close my hand,
 Enjoin'd me to be secret, and return
 With speed and privacy, whatever Essex
 Should give in answer.

C E C I L.

— Ha! this covert message,
 I like it not—Would heaven the deed were done!
 Aye then—but now 'tis doubtful working all,
 And curs'd suspension.

N O T T I N G H A M.

— Cecil, do not fear,
 But I shall render a well-pleasing issue
 Of this same interview with my beloved!

C E C I L.

There rest my hopes; state policy already
 Hath spent its shafts, and waits the master stroke—
 From your superior genius. I will hence
 With Raleigh to the Queen, and strive to fix
 Her wavering mind.

[Exit Cecil.

N O T.

NOTTINGHAM.

Come now revenge, thou idol
Of slighted woman!—Come, and steel my breast
Against all sense of pity, or remorse.

Enter ESSEX.

ESSEX.

Fair visitant, to whom may Essex stand
Indebted for this grace?

NOTTINGHAM.

— Chiefly, my lord,
To the Queen's majesty; and some small matter
To one who loving well, tho' most unhappily,
Has not yet learn'd entirely to erase
The fond impression.

ESSEX.

— Your reproof is gentle—
Were Rutland to be born, I must admit
All hearts had then been Nottingham's.

NOTTINGHAM.

— Your pardon—
No more of hearts I pray—but for your friendship,
I will dispute it even with her who claims
Possession of your heart—The Queen, my lord,
Commends the value of her pity to you;
And kindly asks if you have ought to offer
In mitigation of your sentence?

ESSEX.

Nothing.

NOTTINGHAM.

Some light exception, touching law, or form;
Apparent malice in the prosecution;
Error of judgment—but the slightest hinge,
Whereon to hang her mercy.

ESSEX.

E S S E X.

— Not the slightest—
 Tell her, most fair, and charitable messenger,
 My course of tryal has been free and equal;
 I stand self-censur'd in my guiltiness:
 And mercy—what in mercy may ensue,
 Is all her own, unpleaded.

N O T T I N G H A M.

— How, my lord,
 No more than so? this cannot, must not be.
 The appointed time is on you; this short hour
 May seal your doom—O let me beg, implore you,
 As if for my own life, to use the means
 Are left you to preserve yourself, your friend—
 Say, have you not a farther plea? you hesitate—
 A farther cause for hope?—You have, I know it—
 Intrust me with it; by yon heaven I swear,
 I will not leave the Queen, till she has granted
 My utmost wish.

E S S E X.

— I have not merited
 This kind concern; but yet your generous warmth
 Demands my confidence. Behold this signet!
 It is a talisman, and bears a charm,
 By royal breath infus'd, of pow'r to save
 Ev'n from the jaws of death.

N O T T I N G H A M.

— O let me catch it
 That I may fly—

E S S E X.

Hold, generous fair one! first
 Hear my request—present this to the Queen
 From dying Essex—Say her dying Essex
 Adjures her by the virtue of this ring,
 To save his friend, to spare Southampton's life,
 And he shall fall content.

N O T.

The EARL of ESSEX.

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NOTTINGHAM.

O stint not thus

The royal bounty—Do not circumscribe

The bounds of mercy—By the same request,

By the same breath, a life more precious far

May be preserv'd—it must—it shall.

ESSEX.

— I dare not

Urge such a suit—Yet if my gracious mistress

Still thinks me worth preserving, I am not.

So weary of the world, but I would take

The boon with grateful heart, and live to thank her.

But O, be sure you urge my other suit;

Save my Southampton's life, let him not fall

A victim to my crimes—Alas! he knows

No guilt, but friendship. So may conscious peace

Sweeten your days, and brighten your last moments!

[Exit Essex.]

NOTTINGHAM.

Now he is mine! at least in death my own,

For ever seal'd; tho' not for love's light rapture,

For hatred, full as joyous—deeper far,

And more enduring. Now to take him sudden,

When the full tide returning fraught with hope,

Lifts him elate—To plunge him down at once

To the eternal bottom—This, aye this

Alone can satiate—'Tis the luxury

Of eager-ey'd revenge. The Queen—no matter—

I am prepar'd—be but my vengeance safe,

And for the rest, events are equal all.

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN.

Well, my dear Nottingham, hast seen the earl?

NOT.

NOTTINGHAM.

Madam, I have.

QUEEN.

I could not be at peace within my palace,
 For crowds that urg'd petitions in his favour.
 Well, and what pass'd?

NOTTINGHAM.

Madam——

QUEEN.

Say——

NOTTINGHAM.

I wish——

QUEEN.

Madam—I wish—What mean'st thou?

NOTTINGHAM.

I wish your majesty had spar'd your servant
 This single office.

QUEEN.

Why?——

NOTTINGHAM.

——I had not been
 The unwelcome bearer of ungrateful tydings.

QUEEN.

Inform me quick—ungrateful tydings say'st thou?

NOTTINGHAM.

O, on my knees I beg, my royal mistress,
 You would enquire no farther.

QUEEN.

Thou dost amaze me!

NOTTINGHAM.

You lately held me for an enemy
 To this brave man, and still may think me apt
 To misinterpret——

QUEEN.

Q U E E N.

No, I will believe thee.

N O T T I N G H A M.

He's here at hand—Your majesty in person
May now inform yourself——

Q U E E N.

No more, I charge you——
Be full, and speedy—Give me up the whole
Of what has pass'd.

N O T T I N G H A M.

I must obey you then——
And yet I fear—When first the earl appear'd
He wore a kind of haughty discontent,
That seem'd to mock misfortune; scarce he deign'd
To note that I was present.

Q U E E N.

—— What, so high?

N O T T I N G H A M.

Yet not ungraceful. Greatly I deplor'd
The precipice to which misdeeming error,
Or accident had led him—bid him yet
Not to despond—for much was in the power
Of royal pity—Then I minded him
Of your past favours—All his honours, offices,
Your late support against his powerful foes,
And this last act of your divine compassion,
That would not let him finally be lost,
But sent your special servant to concert
The means of safety to him.

Q U E E N.

—— Then he did melt.

N O T T I N G H A M.

Let me stop here—for sure such height of pride,
In one of less exalted qualities,

Were

Were not to be endur'd—Still as I spoke,
He look'd, and mov'd, and turn'd, and chang'd im-
patient;

Favours ! he cry'd, what favours ? posts of danger,
And empty titles for essential service :

Yes—she has well avow'd her grace to Essex,

In all her public scoffs, and open insults,

Laid as a subtle train to fire my temper

To acts obnoxious to the law ; and then

Her jury of pack'd peers, and this smooth message

To lull me to the last.

QUEEN.

Hold, Nottingham—

O, he's the most accurs'd for deep ingratitude,

That e'er prov'd false to friendship—Tell me, Not-
tingham,

I can no longer wait the tedious preface—

Say, did he claim no mercy at our hands ?

NOTTINGHAM.

Not any, madam.

QUEEN.

Spoke he of no pledge ?

No obligation that I had to save him ?

NOTTINGHAM.

No, on my honour.

QUEEN.

— By thy hopes of mercy,

Answer as at the last tremendous bar—

No pledge, no token, sent he not a ring ?

Look at me, and reply ; did he not send

A ring in answer ?

NOTTINGHAM.

You amaze me, madam !

I'm quite to seek in this—What ring ? what token ?

Had

Had you but told me, had your majesty
Once hinted such a thing, I had requir'd it.

Q U E E N.

O, I am choak'd! he pulls his own destruction
In his blind fury on himself.

N O T T I N G H A M.

Alas,
Tokens of mercy! he disclaim'd the offer:
He said, he wou'd no more of royal mercy!
Such as was shewn to Rutland, to his wife;
As tho' the British breed of noble bloods,
Were slaves for pride to spurn.

Q U E E N.

No more, no more——
I'm all on fire—This fever of the blood,
It thirsts to death!—Who waits?

Enter C E C I L and R A L E I G H.

My lords,
See speedy execution done on Essex——
I have determined not to quit the Tower,
While he is master of his head—Lord Cecil,
Do you and Raleigh see it done.

[Exeunt Queen and Nottingham.]

R A L E I G H.

Think you, my lord, how long a woman's will,
Altho' the first, and foremost of her sex,
May hold its purpose?

C E C I L.

If a fav'rite point
Mayhap, an hour or so; therefore the half
Shall now suffice us Raleigh—Who attends?

F

Enter

Enter an Officer.

Bid the lieutenant have his pris'ners ready.

[Exit Officer.]

Now we may hope for sunny days in England,
When this all-covering cloud is overpast;
Whose greatness did imbibe the beams of majesty,
Nor suffer'd ought to pass but by transmission
Thro' its own radiant skirts.

*Enter Lieutenant of the Tower, with ESSEX and
SOUTHAMPTON guarded.*

CECIL,

My lord of Essex,
We bring an order for your Execution.
I have a christian's hope you stand prepar'd;
For even a portion of the present hour
Must be your last of life.

ESSEX.

Ha! short indeed,
For infinite intendments! 'tis thy will
O heaven! collect me to it: give me strength
To face this king of terrors—fill my breast
With hope, and purest faith, that on the block
I may lye down, as on the plaintless bed
Of sleeping infancy. Thanks, gracious heaven!
I feel my granted prayer; and a new vigour
Springs in my breast!—I now can smile at death.
But oh, my friend! no pardon yet arriv'd!
Can the Queen falsify her word?

SOUTH-

SOUTHAMPTON.

Come, Essex—
Let us now leave a lesson to our foes,
How men should die.

ESSEX.

Were I alone to suffer,
I think I should not give them cause to scorn me.
But oh! 'tis here—
A weight of lead on my aspiring spirit,
That I have rent the virtues of Southampton
Untimely from the world.

SOUTHAMPTON.

Be witness heaven!
The dearest wish Southampton's soul could form,
Would be to live for ever with his Essex:
The next, thus join'd to lie in death together.

Enter Lieutenant of the Tower.

LIEUTENANT.

My lord Southampton,
I have a message for your private ear.

SOUTHAMPTON.

Speak out, nor fear to wound me with the tidings:
The worst is death, and that is past already.

LIEUTENANT.

My lord, I must intreat you will withdraw;
Something of moment from her majesty.

[*Exeunt Southampton and Lieutenant.*]

ESSEX.

Cecil, when you approach an hour like this,
 You then may learn how low ambition is;
 How groundless is the quarrel, which contends
 For this vain world—'Till then—'till then and ever,
 The foes of Essex have free pardon. Ha!

Enter SOUTHAMPTON *and* Lieutenant.

What new distress? what can this mean? in tears!
 Nay then the stroke must be severe indeed,
 That shocks the manly firmness of thy soul.
 O that the bitter cup were all my own!
 What is it, say?

SOUTHAMPTON.

It is—it is—O misery!
 'Tis torture—'tis the death contriv'd by tyrants,
 It is the spinning of life's lingering thread
 To agony unspeakable; it is
 The death of friendship, the attempt to rend
 Th' eternal bonds of soul and soul asunder.
 The Queen hath sent me——

ESSEX.

Warrant of death.

SOUTHAMPTON.

No, worse——

ESSEX.

Can there be worse?

SOUTHAMPTON.

Yes, pardon.

ESSEX.

ESSEX.

Catch the sound,
 Ye choiring angels, and with hovering wings
 Of ever wakeful 'tendance guard my Queen,
 Whose mercy at an hour like this has spar'd
 The guilt, the life of Essex, in his friend.

SOUTHAMPTON.

No, no, my brother,
 We will not part—Southampton does disclaim.
 Her barbarous mercy—What a joyless wild
 This world would be without thee! where alas,
 Where should I find the bosom to partake
 And double every joy? Where should I find
 The tender sympathizing heart to feel,
 And lighten ev'ry woe? No more the tongue
 Of friendship, sweetest music to the ear!
 Should greet my desert sense: no more my hours
 In social raptures steal away unmark'd;
 Those blessed hours when soul with soul converses,
 Transparent, pure, as from their bodies freed.
 O Essex, think upon the early ties
 That in our tender years join'd our fond hearts;
 Think how they grew, how they were twin'd to-
 gether;
 And shall they now be parted? No, my Essex,
 In life we have been one, and in our deaths
 We will not be divided.

ESSEX.

—There is a cause, a precious cause, my brother,
 Thou still must live, to love, to serve, to save him,
 All that shall suddenly be left of Essex;
 Where yet he lives, much more than to himself,
 Thro' every pulse, and trembling chord infus'd
 With quick, and dear sensation—Lend thy bosom

F 3

To

70 The EARL of ESSEX.

To hide one tear that will not be withheld,
Yet here 'tis due from manhood—O my wife!—

SOUTHAMPTON.

I had forgot—Yes, Essex, I will live—
For thy dear sake I'll make a weary pilgrimage,
To guide thy other self thro' all the thorns
And mazes of the world; 'till the wish'd hour
By fate appointed comes, when we shall meet
To part no more.

ESSEX.

Cherish, protect, support her.

SOUTHAMPTON.

Ever, ever.

ESSEX.

Then the great business of the world is over—
You two make all my treasure left on earth;
Comfort each other, we shall meet hereafter
In happier climes—The heaven I have in view
Will not be perfect else—'Till then, farewell.

SOUTHAMPTON.

Whilst I have speech to say—'till then, farewell.

[Exit Southampton.]

ESSEX.

Now on, my lords, and execute your office.

[Exeunt Cecil and Raleigh.]

Enter

The EARL of ESSEX.

71

Enter RUTLAND and Ladies.

RUTLAND.

Where is he? let me catch him! hold him! save him!

Rush on the stroke that would attempt his life——

Oh Essex, oh my lord——

ESSEX.

——This is too much!

Too much for man!—I hop'd—ah cruel dear;

Were not eternity, and sudden death,

Of weight sufficient to a mortal nature?

And art thou come to reinforce their powers,

And weaken what was left of man about me?

RUTLAND.

The Queen, my love—the queen permits this meeting,

And therefore grants, that we shall part no more.

ESSEX.

What dost thou mean?—Thy looks are wild, and keen;

They pierce my soul—Retire, my angel—do—

Let me prevail, and recollect thy spirits,

But for a moment.

RUTLAND.

'Tis impossible——

High heaven doth know it is impossible——

I cannot leave thee—never will I leave thee,

Sure we may die together——

ESSEX.

My soul's treasure!

It is in vain, the hand of stronger fate

Compels, and we must part.

F 4

LIEUT-

LIEUTENANT.

My gracious lord,
Your latest minute is at hand——

RUTLAND.

What's this?
An axe! an executioner!—'Tis dreadful!
I'm not prepar'd for this—Is it a dream?
If you have pity, wake me.

ESSEX.

A short absence——
No more—'Tis but to bid one dear farewell,
'Till we do meet to part no more.

RUTLAND.

Ah whither would'st thou?—Think not to escape me—
No barbarous Essex, thou shalt never part me,
I'll cling to thee in death.

ESSEX.

This, this, cuts keen
And deep, beyond the shallow reach of steel;
It is the quick of soul that here is pierc'd!
Haste, haste, in pity as I stand dispatch me——
Is there not one, one hand of friendly mercy,
To lodge a poniard here?——
Quick, drag me to the block—Help me to sunder—
Yet hurt her not—It is in vain——She grasps me
As in the agonies of death——Lost wretch!
And wert thou born to this? Accurs'd the hour
That gave me up to light!——Yet more accurs'd
That hour I once deem'd happiest over all
The world calls happy, to this blessed flower
Tying my baleful influence——Ha! she's going,
Her speechless lip grows livid, and those orbs,
Wane from their peerless lustre——Gently, gently,
Now loose her hold—Support her.——

LIEUT.

The EARL of ESSEX. 73

LIEUTENANT.

Now, my lord,
'Twere best to seize the occasion—The time's past
My orders are——

ESSEX.

Come then, and push me off,
Down the dark void that spreads upon futurity.—
Oh! my lost love! —
O Gem! for which the world were richly sold!
If there's a heaven, can counterpoise thy loss,
It is indeed beyond imagination!
Night comes upon me—When my eyes have ta'en
Their last, last look—The bitterness of death
Is past—And the world now is nothing.

[Exeunt Essex, &c.]

Enter QUEEN, NOTTINGHAM, Ladies
and Gentlemen, &c.

QUEEN.

Is he then gone?—To death?—Essex to death!
And by my order?—Now perhaps—This moment—
Haste Nottingham, dispatch——

NOTTINGHAM.

What would your majesty!

QUEEN.

I know not what, I am in horrors, Nottingham,
In horrors worse than death—Does he still live?
Run, bring me word—Yet stay—Can you not save
him

Without my bidding? Read it in my heart——
In my distraction read—O, sure the hand

That

74 The E A R L of E S S E X.

That fav'd him, would be as a blessed angel's
Pou'ring soft balm into my rankling breast.

NOTTINGHAM.

If it shall please your majesty to give
Express commands, I shall obey them streight—
The world will think it strange—But you are
Queen.

QUEEN.

Hard-hearted Nottingham! to arm my pride,
My shame, against my mercy.—Ha! what's here?
A fight to strike resentment dead, and rouse
Soft pity even in a barbarous breast—
It is the wife of Essex!
Rise Rutland, come to thy repentant mistress:
See the Queen bends to take thee to her bosom,
And foster thee for ever—Rise.

RUTLAND.

Which way?

Do you not see these circling steeps?—

Not all the fathom lines that have been loos'd
To sound the bottom of the faithless main,
Could reach to draw me hence. Never was dug
A grave so deep as mine!—Help me, kind friend,
Help me to put these little bones together—
These are my messengers to yonder world,
To seek for some kind hand to drop me down,
A little charity.

QUEEN.

Heart-breaking sounds!

RUTLAND.

These were an infant's bones—But hush—Don't
tell—

Don't tell the Queen—

An unborn infant's—May be if 'tis known
They'll say I murder'd it—Indeed I did not—
It was the axe—How strange soe'er, 'tis true!

Help

Help me to put them right, and then they'll fly—
For they are light, and not like mine, incumber'd
With limbs of marble, and a heart of lead.

QUEEN.

Alas! her reason is disturb'd; her eyes
Are wild, and absent—Do you know me, Rutland?
Do you not know your Queen?

RUTLAND.

O yes, the Queen!
They say you've power of life, and death—Poor
Queen!
They flatter you.—You can take life away,
But can you give it back? No, no, poor Queen.—
Look at these eyes—They are a widow's eyes—
Do you know that?—Perhaps indeed you'll say;
A widow's eyes should weep, and mine are dry;
That's not my fault, tears shou'd come from the
heart,
And mine is dead—I feel it cold within me,
Cold as a stone—But yet my brain is hot—
O fye upon this head! it is stark naught;
Beseech your majesty to cut it off,
The bloody axe is ready—Say the word,
(For none can cut off heads without your leave)
And it is done—I humbly thank your highness,
You look a kind consent. I'll but just in
And say a prayer or two.
From my youth upwards I still said my prayers
Before I slept; and this is my last sleep.
Indeed 'tis not thro' fear, nor to gain time—
Not your own soldier could meet death more bravely.
You shall be judge yourself.—We must make
haste—
I pray be ready—If we lose no time,
I shall o'ertake and join him on the way.

[Exit Rutland.

QUEEN.

76 The EARL of ESSEX,

QUEEN.

Follow her close, allure her to some chamber
Of privacy ; there sooth her frenzy, but
Take care she go not forth. Heaven grant I may
not
Require such aid myself ! for sure I feel
A strange commotion here.

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

May it please your majesty,
The earl, as he address'd him to the block,
Requested but the time to write these lines ;
And earnestly conjur'd me to deliver them
Into your royal hands.

QUEEN.

Quick—What is here !—Just heaven ! fly, take
this signet
Stop execution, fly with eagle's wings—
What art thou ?—Of this world.

NOTTINGHAM.

Ha !—I'm discover'd—
Then be it so—Your majesty may spare—

QUEEN.

Stop, stop her yell !—Hence to some dungeon,
hence—
Deep sunk from day ; in horrid silence there
Let conscience talk to thee, infix its stings,
Awake remorse, and desperate penitence ;
And from the torments of thy conscious guilt
May hell be all thy refuge !

[Exit Nottingham, guarded.]

Enter

Enter CECIL, RALEIGH, &c.

CECIL.

Gracious madam,

I grieve to say your order came too late;
We met the messenger on our return
From seeing the earl fall.

QUEEN.

Cecil, thou do'st not know what thou hast done—
Pronounc'd sentence of death upon thy Queen.

Cecil—I will no more ascend my throne,
The humble floor shall serve me; here I'll sit.
With moaping melancholy my companion,
'Till death unmark'd approach, and steal me to my
grave.

Cecil—I never more will close these eyes
In sleep, nor taste of food—And Cecil now,
Mark me—You hear Elizabeth's last words.



EPILOGUE

Written by Mr. GARRICK.

Spoken by Mrs. PRITCHARD, in the Character of Queen ELIZABETH.

IF any here, are Britons but in name,
Dead to their country's happiness and fame:
Let 'em depart this moment—Let 'em fly
My awful presence, and my searching eye!

No more your Queen, but upright judge I come,
To try your deeds abroad, your lives at home;
Try you in ev'ry point, from small to great,
Your Wit,—Laws,—Fashions,—Valor,—Church
and State!

Search you, as Britons ne'er were search'd before:
“O tremble! for you hear the lion roar!”

Since that most glorious time that here I reign'd,
An age and half!—What have you lost or gain'd?
Your Wit—Whate'er your poets sing or swear;
Since Shakespear's time is somewhat worse for wear.
Your Laws are good, your Lawyers good of course;
The streams are surely clear, when clear the source:
In greater store these blessings now are sent ye;
Where I had one attorney, you have twenty.
Fashions, ye fair, deserve nor praise nor blame;
Unless they rise as foes to sense or shame;
Wear ruffs, or gauze—But let your skill be such,
Rather to shew too little, than too much.

EPILOGUE.

*As for your Valour—here my lips I close—
Let those who best have prov'd it—speak—Your foes.
Your Morals, Church, and State, are still behind—
But soft—prophetic fury fills my mind!
I see thro' time—Behold a youthful hand,
Holding the sceptre of this happy land;
Whose heart with justice, love, and virtue fraught—
Born amongst Britons, and by Britons taught;
Shall make the barking tongues of faction cease,
And weave the garland of domestic peace:
Long shall he reign—no storms to beat his breast,
Unruly passions that disturb'd my rest!
Shall live, the blessings he bestows, to share,
Reap all my glory, but without my care.*

F I N I S.



EPILOGUE

Read all my glory, but without my care,
 Spoke thus, the blessing he bestowed, to spare,
 Unhappy Nations that dy'd in my rage!
 Long shall he reign—no former's lost his breath,
 And rescue the gardens of domestic peace:
 Shall make the barking tongues of Justice cease,
 Born amongst Devils, and by Devils taught;
 Who's heart with justice, love, and virtue fraught—
 Holding the sceptre of this happy land;
 In two times—Behold a youthful band,
 But lost—prophetic fury fills my mind!
 Your Morals, Church, and State, are still behind—
 In whose debt I have paid it—Back—Your fear—
 For your Valour—before my lips I close—

FINIS



Ratte all
 Spott
 Turn
 Long
 And
 Small
 Down
 Up
 Holding
 Life
 But
 In
 For